nadananda

child of the great cosmic mother & friend of the the eel river

I've lived all over the world,
but never returned to any one place,
except Humboldt County.
I have left many times, but I keep feeling called back.

the teacher appears

In the sixties I lived in Tanzania with my two baby boys and my husband, who was an agricultural advisor in the Peace Corps. In the seventies, I became a community organizer and worked for Werner Erhard. When I first came to the Mendocino coast, I lived in Albion and became the director of the Albion Community Center. Later I worked at the Mendocino Art Center, where I organized the Mendocino Performing Arts Company. At that time I was known as Patricia Hamilton.

By the early eighties, I edited a magazine for the Mendocino Environmental Center called *Eco-Logic*. This was when I became so distressed with double-speak politicians that my wild temper would take control of me. One day I was down on my knees, saying, "Oh, God, if there's really a God, show me a sign. I must do something with this energy!"

Three nights in a row, I had the same dream. I saw a tiny figure, far away, who kept coming closer and closer until it sat on my chest and entered my body. Up close, I saw that it was actually an old person sitting in the lotus position. All night long a voice kept saying, "I am whole, I am complete, I am good." For three days and nights, the voice continued, even when I was having conversations with people.

On the fourth day, I went with friends to Stanford University, to the Meeting of the Ways Conference—the first big conference where the spiritual and anti-war communities came together. On the way, I was chattering with my friends and completely forgot about the dream and the voice.

Since I had been living in Africa during much of the 1960s, I had never heard Daniel Ellsberg, Joanna Macy, Ram Dass or Sachadananda speak. When we arrived at the opening session, all the stars were on stage. Then this incredibly beautiful little man dressed in orange, with a gorgeous orange turban, went up to the podium, and chanted in Sanskrit. With a wave of his hand, suddenly there were flames coming up from a bowl. I thought, "Wow, what was that? Wouldn't it be neat to meet him? But that won't happen in this crowd." Moments later, I went out to get a drink of water in the hallway, and ran into a friend I hadn't seen in five years. When I asked him what he was doing there, he said he was traveling with Dr. Mishra. "Who is Dr. Mishra?" I said. "You know," he replied. "He just did the fires up on the stage." I said, "Oh, I was thinking it would be neat to meet him." My friend said, "You can; He's standing right behind you." That meeting profoundly changed my life.

Dr. Mishra was a world-renowned doctor who had a phenomenal following because of his high cure rate. He taught that, although he could cut out whatever had manifested physically, holistic yoga practices could get to the root cause of disease and encourage permanent healing. When I went to his ashram, I was taken to his beautiful private residence. I walked in and put my hand out thinking he was going to shake it. Instead he put his hand on my head. My head felt as if it were bing split in two. I saw an electric-blue bolt of lightening and went into a bliss state for an eternal moment. After that experience, I studied with Dr. Mishra for over twelve years.

As a child I had been so traumatized that I felt I constantly had to hold onto the inner wall encasing my trauma. I was not fully using my faculties. Working and studying with Dr. Mishra in the traditional way—reading, writing, analyzing and fully experiencing—I started to see things in new ways. My left and right brain hemispheres came into balance. Over the years I would go study with him and then return to the world to assimilate my learning. By 1992, when Dr. Mishra gave me my name, Nadananda, I had changed completely from the person who had left Mendocino in 1982.

a light in my life

In the early nineties, when books such as *When God Was a Woman, The Descent of Woman* and *The Great Cosmic Mother* were coming out, I began doing full-moon women's groups and rituals in Marin. I had an incredible thirst for knowledge of the Great Cosmic Mother. Then during one of the last meditations with Dr Mishra, I stayed aware of everything going on in the room, but was totally detached from it. At the end of the session, I heard him connect us to the Great Cosmic Mother and became totally electrified.

Not long after that, I was sitting on my boat in Sausalito and experienced an intense thirst. As I walked across to the galley, I crossed an area of the floor where the energy was particularly intense—a place where the floor was at the same level as the water. As I got there, I felt as if I had been hit from behind. My knees buckled, and I started to fall on the floor. As my arm caught the edge of the couch, I put my face down into my arm and felt an intense longing to see my mother's face. I thought, "If I could just get an image of my mother." (I had been kidnapped from her when I was seven and never got to see her again. I've seen pictures, but I don't have my own inner image of her.)

the vision

The next thing I knew, I was nuzzling a newborn baby's face. Looking closer, I realized it was my mother nuzzling *my* face. As I looked to see her, all I could see was moss . . . then moss on rock, then rocks and pebbles and a creek bed; then the sides of a riverbank and the trees, and then bigger trees. I felt as if I were being lifted up. I moved into a meadow with wildflowers. The wind was blowing through the grasses in huge waves. It was exhilarating. Then I was in the woods again, which became deeper woods; then I was going up hillsides. The hillsides became more rugged, with fewer trees and more rock; then I was on ridgetops; then blue sky. There was a light-blue clearing, and then deep black-blue skies full of stars. I was whipping past stars and whole constellations. The sense of expansion became so great, I thought I was going to explode! Suddenly I realized I was feeling all the edges of myself, and you don't feel the edges of yourself unless something's holding you. I realized it was the Great Cosmic Mother holding me. Suddenly I was back in the boat again. My first thoughts were, "I could never tell anybody this!" Then, "Oh, I must tell. I must keep it alive." But what did it mean? I didn't care. I just wanted to be with it.

Moon Flight. Oil painting by Susan deVeuve (Sojourn cover artist Summer 98, Issue 7) *Website: www.deveuve-kelly.com*

meeting the eel

Right after that experience on the boat, I went up to my first women's gathering at Heartwood, near Garberville on the main stem of the Eel River. That area reminded me of the big-country views of Montana, Texas or Australia, with big, open skies. It was extraordinary to see the undulations of the Earth, the mysterious valleys, and all the shapes and colors. Up on the Eel River watershed in March, it rained daily, so everything was vibrating with that chartreuse-green of new growth. The Earth was visually electric. You could see it vibrating. The air was full of fragrances and freshness. I kept having the sense that I was back in the Garden of Eden, and that I was one of Eve's mother's other daughters! What an incredible shift in consciousness! The Garden of Eden was real. After a very short period of time, I moved to that area Of Humboldt County.

life on the eel watershed

I spent about a year living in very isolated places, doing a lot of meditation and contemplation. I played Tibetan bells and bowls and spent hours and days by myself without seeing any other people. In one place, the folds of the earth were such that two creeks came together and went off as one. The landscape formed an ear-shaped bowl, and you could hear the sounds of the bells and bowls change as the light shifted in relationship to the bottom of the valley. As the shadows came, the sounds seemed to travel with them up the sides of the valley. This would reverse in the morning. When I played bells and bowls that were tuned to each other, the sound went from a "whrrrr" to suddenly not being in the bowl anymore. It transfered to the middle of the circle and I could hear where the sound waves crisscross. This is the sound of the universal energy—like a million crickets in the countryside at sunset.

the river is dead?

On the fall equinox of 1994, I was doing a sweatlodge with some friends at a campground called Ravencliff on the south fork of the Eel. It was the site of an ancient Indian village. We were chanting and playing drums

by some deep swimming holes. A few nights before, I had heard a man from Fish and Game say, "The Eel River is dead." Recalling this, I felt myself caught in a deep body sob and wanted to scream, "What do you mean, the Eel River is dead?" I thought, "There's water flowing: I can see fish in there; there are no toxic chemicals in the water; it's not on fire." What did this mean?

I immediately started a study group. The Environmental Protection Information Center (EPIC) in Garberville gave me a desk and a telephone, and let me start making calls to try to find out what this so-called "dead river" idea was all about. Our first study-group meeting was astonishing. People came from all over the watershed, including a tribesperson from Covelo and people from as far away as McKinleyville. A lot of them were agency people from Fish and Game.

I think it was the tribesperson from Covelo who brought up the Potter Valley Project. As he started to speak, an agency person cut him short and said, "If you folks are going to sit here and talk about the Potter Valley Project, then I'm out of here, because it's a waste of time to deal with anything on the Eel River south of Dos Rios." I thought that was an extraordinary statement. I wondered, "Why should the river not be talked about south of Dos Rios?" (Dos Rios is the point of confluence of the main stem and the middle fork.) We agreed not to talk about it so that we could continue the discussion, but after the meeting everyone turned to each other and said, "What's the Potter Valley Project?" Our Indian brother was still there, and he gave us an earful, so we decided to look into it more.

The landscape formed an ear-shaped bowl, and you could hear the sounds of bells and bowls change as the light shifted in relationship to the bottom of the valley.

We began learning about the fate of the Eel River at Potter Valley and also that a window of opportunity was opening up. We had a chance to influence the policies that were damaging the river.

At this point, I was as naïve and ignorant as could be. It just seemed to me that something here was not right, and that I had to stand up and ask questions. After all, it was now my generation's turn.

friends of the eel river

The following June, at the Blue Sky Swimming Club at Alderpoint (a part of the river that the local community bought to keep as a swimming hole), several of us met to form the first Board of Directors of Friends of the Eel River.

I had a full-time job, so the first couple of years I financed most of our work out of my own pocket. I went to meetings, did studies, read reports and became educated. All of this felt guided: what I needed came to me. At first I thought, "I'll do the research and organize things; then someone else who's more knowledgeable will come in and take over." But no one else ever came to lead us. People began encouraging me, coming to meetings and giving money to help with expenses. In this last year, I've been surprised at my ferocity in protecting the organization. As long as I continue on this planet, my prayer is that my life be of use, that "Thy will be done."

the watershed

The watershed is our life-support system. The watershed is where the water we drink, the food we eat and the air we breathe come from. The water runs not just down the slopes on the surface, but through all the things that absorb it, like the trees. It runs down their trunks and drips off their leaves. The redwoods condense the fog into drops of water, like dew collects on plastic. The oaks suck water out of the Earth and fill their limbs—so that they sometimes explode or fall off from the heaviness. A mutual interaction goes on—of channeling, distribution and recycling water.

If you look at hills that have been stripped of trees, you can see the shape of the watershed, with its ridges and folds. Imagine the water hitting those, and you'll see how it comes down and where it collects.

dams

Part of the watershed is its subterranean base, its geomorphology. On the Eel River, the base is mostly not solid. It is a kind of "tectonic toothpaste." Some of the dams in our region—such as Scott Dam and Cape Horn Dam—are built on earthquake faults, and there is danger of slipping. No one knows how far they'd have to dig to create a solid anchor or foothold. Isn't that extraordinary? One does wonder about the education of the engineers who build these dams. I think they're just boys playing with tinker toys.

When politicians talk about how we have lost almost all our natural fisheries, every manner of reason is given: "It's all those seals at the mouth of the rivers; we must get permission from Fish and Game to go and shoot them all." Or, "It's the ocean conditions. Everyone knows that." Or, "Logging has destroyed the streams." The truth is that the problem stems from a combination of things. But, most importantly, if you build a dam that cuts off the spawning grounds—the nursery, the place where the next generation will come from—you aren't going to have fish.

Is it too hard to understand that the 1,400 dams in California impact the fisheries? Some people say, "Don't talk about dams. That's too big. What are you going to do, take on the Army Corps of Engineers? Or big money?" Dams are a major problem worldwide. They've gotten bigger and bigger, and have displaced millions of people.

what's wrong with the potter valley project?

Fish and Game now says the Eel River isn't dead, but is in a very fragile condition. This is true. It used to be the third-largest producer of Coho and Chinook salmon in the state (the Sacramento River system, the Klamath, and then the Eel) and the second-largest producer of all salmon (Coho, Chinook and Steelhead).

The Eel River system is the third-largest watershed in the state of California. It travels over 200 air miles, and its fish climb 4,500 feet. It has a wild and scenic designation both state and national. Whereas the Russian River is one river with small tributaries, the Eel includes five major river systems: the main stem, the middle fork, the north fork, the Van Dusen River and the south fork. These carry lots and lots of water. The dam at Potter Valley has so impacted the entire system because it is located at the headwaters of the main stem.

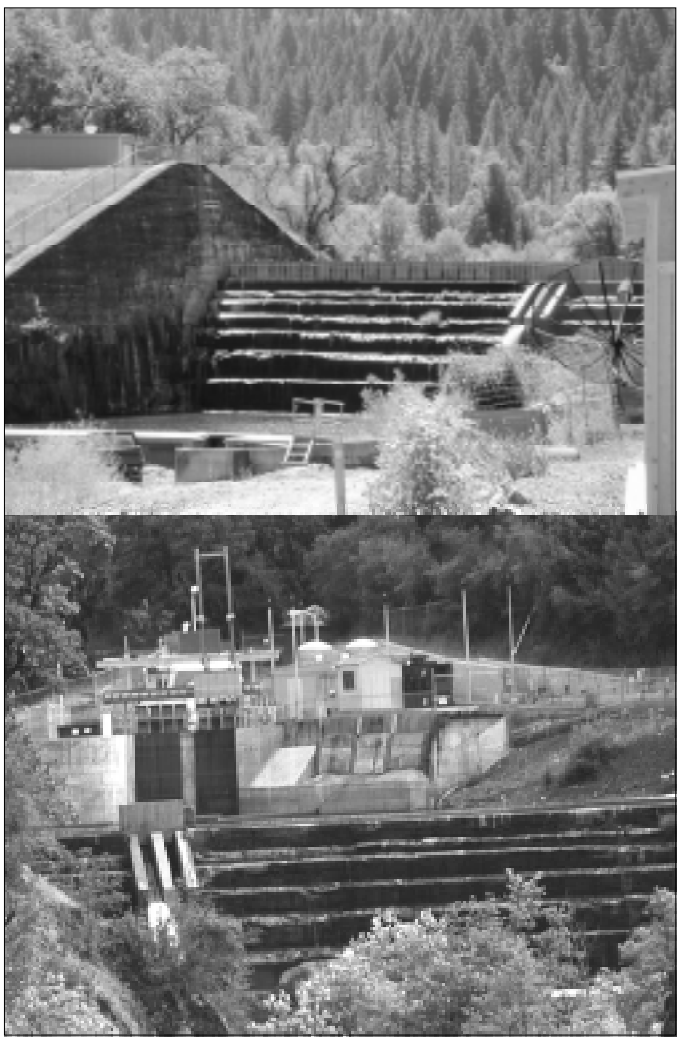
In 1908, the Cape Horn Dam was completed, along with a mile-long tunnel that drops 400 feet in elevation into Potter Valley and diverts water from the Eel to the Russian River. Building that tunnel was quite a feat, as the workers had to dig through hard rock. The Chinese were being kicked out of the gold fields and were going back to San Francisco, so it was easy to gather them and bring them up to do the labor. There are horror stories about what happened to them afterward.

The Cape Horn Dam was good for Ukiah because it provided hydroelectric power—a cleaner way of making electricity than the coal-operated generators it replaced. If water were put back into the Eel River and the spawning grounds above the dam were not cut off, the dam could provide a very healthy way to get electricity. We wouldn't need nuclear energy, we wouldn't need the coal, and we wouldn't be using oil.

Cape Horn Dam was so successful that Mr. Van Arsdale floated a personal loan to build Scott Dam, twenty miles upstream, which is much bigger. By putting this dam at the narrowest point of the river, Lake Pillsbury was created. Its only purpose is to generate hydropower—it's not for flood control or drinking water. These days, it produces 9.6 megawatts for six to eight months of the year, and only four megawatts the rest of the time. New, environmentally sound techniques of power generation could replace it.

how much is enough?

PG&E has contracted with the California State Water Resources Board for 120,000 acre-feet of water to be taken from the headwaters of the Eel. Since the headwaters produce an average of 400,000 acre-feet per year, and since PG&E actually takes an average of 181,000 acre-feet, they remove almost half of all the water from the area.



Cape Horn Dam with Van Arsdale Reservoir viewed from two directions.
Top photo Jerri-Jo Idarius, bottom photo Rob Badger

Furthermore, during the hot summer months, PG&E reduces the flows into the Eel River to five cubic feet per second. From 1968 to 1983, they were going through re-licensing while battling requests to increase the flows from two cubic feet per second to five! They went from leaving one wet spot to having a little bigger wet spot.

A ten-year study was supposed to determine whether this increase would make any difference in fish populations. Starting with the premise that it wouldn't make any difference, guess what? That's what they found. It took sixteen years to complete the study and hand it over to the Federal

Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). The amount of water flow needed for Eel River fisheries was the major negotiation point, and one that could not be agreed upon—so PG&E was given a license with all provisions except for the needs of the fisheries.

water "rites"

In analyzing water flows, the "authorities" don't take into account the needs of the wildlife and the other life forms dependent on the river. They say, "We do not want water *wasting* into the sea." This notion of water "wasting" to the sea is a public-relations campaign by the Southern California water barons who want justification for taking all the water they can from up north! The water has a job to do! It's not only for the fish and all the animals that eat the fish and spread the nutrients upslope; it also provides the "thalwag"—the energy force that moves the river in spirals and meanders. The arrogance of trying to channel and contain a life force by creating dams interferes with the way the energy flows and moves in the river.

Eel River, Walker Valley area Photo by Jerri-Jo Idarius

Timing is also important. The Eel River can be very flashy—with thousands of cubic feet per second roaring down the canyons—or it can be just a dribble. PG&E could not control the river until it was down to a certain flow. As soon as they could get control of it, they were taking it all—until some people with a ranch downstream went to Sacramento and fought to get two cubic feet per second. That ranch, now owned by Dana Crumb, has kept a toehold open for the Eel. That dribble of life has kept the river flowing.

Historically, in California whoever had the water highest up had control of it, and whoever had it first could take as much as they wanted. For years, that's what the people who were mining in Plumas and Placer counties were doing; the ones farthest upstream took all the water. In hosing water onto the mountainsides—washing them down to get gold (hydropower mining)—they were completely destroying the river system all the way to the San Francisco Bay. The bay is still receiving silt from those days. That's what Hurwitz and Pacific Lumber are doing up in Humboldt County—stripping the hillsides and waiting for the rains to come. When we have incredible deluges in the winter, everything slides right into the river.

negotiations

After I spoke at a meeting of the California State Water Resources Board at the beginning of this struggle, an attorney came up to me and said that we could win a fight for the river based on violations of public trust alone. The history and the documentation were clear. I was stoked to have this information, so we started organizing But since PG&E had not completed their ten-year study, no suits could be brought or enforced at that time.

The study that finally came out in March 1998 was terribly inadequate. Since it didn't cover all the required parameters, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) staff recommended that PG&E do an environmental-impact study on the increased flows for new compliances, and determine what the fisheries needed. There had been an enormous crash in the fisheries during the sixteen-year period it took to produce the report. The National Marine Fishery Service has put Coho and Chinook on the list of endangered species and is considering listing steelhead, too.

The environmental-impact study opened up the process to new players—both intercediaries and interveners. An intercediary is someone who sits in the room and listens to the negotiations but can't say anything. An intervener can contribute to the dialogue. With the help of Bob Biacchi, who wrote our comments and intervener papers, Friends of the Eel River launched into a battle to restore the river. We asked that the tunnel be closed down, the dams dismantled, the spawning grounds restored, and the water returned to the Eel River. Billions of dollars have been lost to the economies of both Mendocino and Humboldt counties because of losses in the fisheries. There is also an incredible dollar loss in sportsfishing,

which filters immediately into the community. People coming for sportsfishing buy tackle at the local store, gas up at the gas station, stay in the local motels and eat at restaurants. When they don't come, this creates a significant economic loss.

the good news

Wherever we have stopped doing bad things to Nature, she rebounds and heals herself. That's still possible for the Eel River. Many people in Mendocino and Humboldt counties never lived here as children. They have no idea how to help the river, but they want to learn and have been flocking to workshops. Many people in the Eel River watershed have been banding together to learn about how to build willow walls, regrade the roads, and replace culverts. They've walked the roads and have written for grants for SB271 funding.

In Laytonville, Evan Engbert and a woman named "Goose" have been doing restoration using bioengineering techniques. They noticed that the streams on their land were having problems, so they followed some guidelines in a book they found, written in the thirties by a Swiss man who was doing restoration work here. Along with a trained team of workers, they have been "growing" banks of soil and rebuilding the willow walls along the river. The soil and debris flowing in the water hits the willow and drops. (After the 1964 flood, a bureaucrat in Washington decided that the flooding on the Eel River was primarily due to too many willows in the river. So they tried to clean them out of the river system, and took the woody debris right out. Now we need to replace it all!)

to bring a dam down

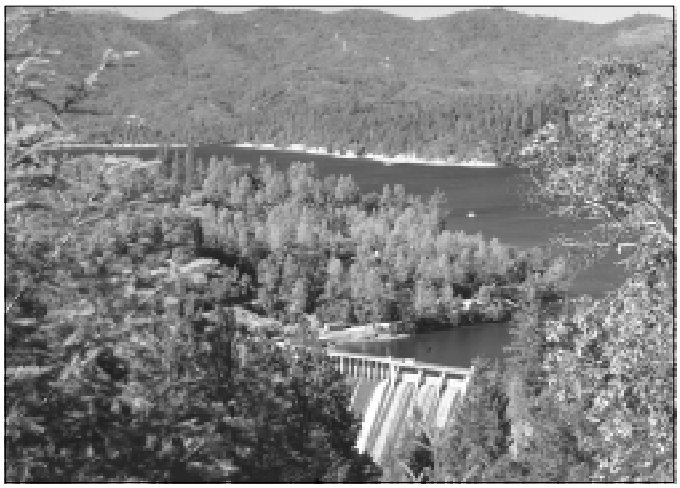
What would happen if the dams came down? How does one best remove a dam? Two big dams on the Elwah River in Washington are coming down. That project has been quite helpful, because government agencies have done extensive studies on all the how-tos as well as on how this would impact the local economy.

Scott Dam, an earthbound dam, could easily be brought down in tiers. As the water level lowered, the dam could be dismantled and the exposed areas replanted. Lake Pillsbury, which is more than 20 percent filled with silt-rich topsoil, could become an international experiment on how to bring a system down, replant it, and let the wildlife come back to regenerate an area. By replicating this local action, we have a great opportunity for a global impact. Bringing dams down here would help stop dams from being built in other places. Around the world, people say, "What they do in America must be good."

Cape Horn Dam, which is quite small, is also filled with silt and could be planted to hold the soil as well. Restoring the Eel River watershed presents a phenomenal job potential. Many people, who don't want to live in the Silicon Valleys of California and hold vacuous jobs, would love to be paid decent wages to do restoration work and live more simply on the land. That's a possible future. There's no reason we can't bring the watersheds back. In the meantime, increasing the water flow should give us time to replant the riparian zones, the areas all along the edge of the river, as they're doing at the Hog Farm in Laytonville.

don't give up the fight!

The Sonoma County Water Agency (SCWA) has been trying to make a move that would lock down the Eel River water forever. Friends of the Eel River (FOER) is suing them, and in going through the discovery papers of the suit, we found studies showing that the foundation of the Cape Horn Dam is shaky. Four locations are being considered for building a new dam. SCWA wants to replace Cape Horn (which is less than fifty feet high) with a 160-foot dam.



Scott Dam & Lake Pillsbury

Face of Scott Dam Photos by Bob Badger

Does it feel safe to have the Sonoma County Water Agency take this system over? Politicians have sold the Mendocino water downstream before. Will we let that happen again?

California water brokers have already taken the Sacramento and other Sierra rivers, and you bet they want the Eel River. They want *all* the water of the Eel River. There are three major dams planned by the Army Corps of Engineers for the Eel River. We beat them once at Dos Rios. They were also beaten back at English Ridge; but that doesn't mean they're not going to come back and try to get the water. Agency dam plans never die.

If SCWA is successful in taking over the PG&E Potter Valley Project, we will not get the mitigation needed for the fish. To really bring the fisheries back, we have to give the fish a place to spawn! The river is too hot, denuded of shade, too broad and too shallow. If the dams are taken down, the water allowed to run its natural course, and the upslopes attended to, nature will rebound.

daily walking

When trying to get jobs done, I pray and meditate a lot. I try to be impeccably honest and to allow what is needed to channel through me. We must empower each other by speaking up. We must protect the river and simply take a stand. What is happening is not right. We must say, "This is our environment, our water, our air. It's our food chain and our habitat." How many mutated fish do you want to eat? The second-generation hatchery fish are sick and strange looking. Their cellular structure is changing. Is that what you want to eat?

I agreed to take on this fight because I felt there was the opportunity to educate people. Friends of the Eel River holds workshops and has been publishing the *Eel River Register* for two years now. Education is our main role. If we don't educate the people, they will never change their lifestyle. This change is not like giving candy up for lent; it's more serious than that. It's a change in what we do moment to moment and day by day. What are we buying? What are we eating? What packaging does our food come in and what are we doing with that?

Refugia is a word we need to become familiar with and use: *refugia* means the refuge—the place of protection. We want to promote that image. We're not trying to hurt Potter Valley or the Russian River; we just want to bring the Eel River system back into its natural state of balance, and create a *refugia* for the next generation of fish for following generations of people to enjoy.

Nadananda and Friends of the Eel River can be contacted by writing PO Box 2305, Redway, CA 95560 or by calling (707) 923-2146.

Cross Currents

The sage leaf floated down, spinning in the air,
and landed near the creek's far bank,
far from where I'd expected.
The air currents just above the water's surface
followed the wash from the higher bank.
Air and then water carried the leaf
almost to the sandy edge.
But not quite.

Slowly, cautiously, it moved downstream,
pushed far from the center by the busy cross current of the water
hurrying down from the far hillside.
Now and then it would hesitate,
as if stopping to complete some unseen task.
Water bugs, the kind that never get wet,
spend their lives suspended on the water's skin,
had taken on the sage leaf as a curiosity.
One by one, stalking, tasting, perhaps wondering
at another strange form of surface walker,
they delayed the passage of the leaf,
but only for a moment.

Gradually it reached for the deeper water
and picked up speed,
becoming part of the faster moving rush.
Then suddenly, spun around on itself,
it was caught in a tiny whirlpool
within the protective hollow of a rock.
There it circled, almost escaping into the current,
then gathered back in by the captured waters
twirling in the shade of the rock.
Finally, a broken edge caught a passing twig,
and a new balance broke the cycle,
freeing the leaf to roll among the splashing,
bubbling waters.

A bend in the creek, another strong cross current,
and again the leaf was pushed out of the mainstream,
closer again to the water's edge.
This time snagged on a tiny pebble,
it could no longer follow the water's flow.

There it will stay, till the next rain swells the creek.
Then the sage leaf will find another chance
to travel downstream,
to bring its aroma and its blessing
to rocks and bugs and rushing waters.

And so will I.

by Jan Allegretti